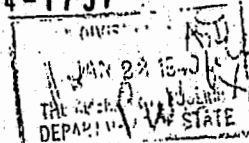


F820004-1757

No. 54



AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL

Buenos Aires, Argentina, January 11, 1940.

*Seen  
forwarded  
1-26-40*

Strictly Confidential

SUBJECT: Activities of German Vessels in Argentine Ports.

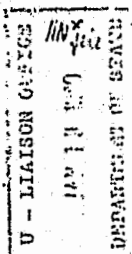
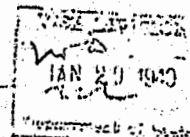
*Copy to Navy 1-20-40, H-L  
Copy to 2 Ki 1-26-40-A-M*

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

WASHINGTON.

SIR:



I have the honor, with reference to my despatch no. 682 of November 17, 1939, and other reports relating to the German vessel Ussukuma which was at the port of Ingeniero White at Bahia Blanca prior to being scuttled off the east coast of Argentina, to transmit herewith a memorandum prepared by Vice Consul Clifton P. English regarding the departure for Chile of Dr. Hermann F. Erben, an American citizen who was serving as ship's surgeon aboard the Ussukuma. It will be noted that Dr. Erben's record and conduct have been such as to give rise to some suspicion with respect to his trustworthiness and loyalty.

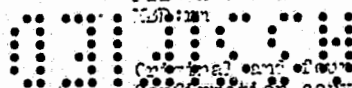
Respectfully yours.

*Harriet B. Davis*  
Monnett B. Davis  
American Consul General

Enclosure:

No. 1. Memorandum.

File no. 885.91



Original and four copies to the Department by air mail. Distribution copy to the Department by regular mail. Copy to the Embassy.

862-5591/736

GRR

F820 004 - 1758

Enclosure No. 1 to despatch No. 754 dated January 11, 1940, from Monnet J. Davis, Consul General at Buenos Aires, Argentina, on subject "Activities of German Vessels in Argentine Ports".

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL  
Buenos Aires, Argentina, January 11, 1940.

MEMORANDUM

Strictly Confidential

TO: The Consul General.  
FROM: Vice Consul Clifton P. English.  
SUBJECT: Dr. Hermann F. Erben of the German Merchant Vessel Ussukuma.

Reference is made to the memorandum transmitted with despatch no. 682 of November 17, 1939, setting forth information obtained from the naturalized American citizen, Dr. Hermann F. Erben. It will be recalled that Dr. Erben was ship's physician on the German vessel Ussukuma. This person recently departed for Chile, stating that he intended to take a Grace Line ship for the United States.

When Dr. Erben left the Ussukuma in Bahia Blanca, he came to Buenos Aires and reported to the Consulate General his desire of returning immediately to the United States. He then made several attempts to secure passage on ships in Buenos Aires, but without success. In this connection reference is made to despatch no. 687 of November 21, 1939, in which it was reported that Dr. Erben's activities as an "ardent Nazi" while serving as ship's physician on the S.S. Mahwah, an American vessel, in 1936 allegedly had occasioned so much trouble that it was necessary for the master to return him from Rio de Janeiro to the United States on a ship of another line; and that Erben was met in New Orleans by Immigration and Department of Justice officers.

After he had been in Buenos Aires several days, Dr. Erben received a telegram in care of the Consulate General and announced that he had received good news, that he was about to receive a sum of money, that he no longer wished to take a ship from Buenos Aires and that he would soon leave for Chile. Subsequently he stated that he was going to Chile to see a "doctor friend who has recently arrived there", and that he was not certain just how he would go to the United States but that he would try to go on a vessel of the Grace Line.

Before he left he gave me several pictures of the Admiral Graf Spee and the Ussukuma, and promised to send me more of the Ussukuma which had been taken while that vessel was at sea between Lourenco Marques and Bahia Blanca. These pictures showed the vessel flying the Portuguese flag with the name Ussukuma obliterated and the name "Quanza" (for a Portuguese ship) painted over the former. He stated that he would have given them to

me

me earlier but that he had sent them with some baggage to San Francisco on board the S.S. Grenanger. Finally, the day before he left for Chile he let slip a remark to the effect that Tito Martens, who is the agent in Buenos Aires for the North German Lloyd and who is reported to have much influence in Nazi circles in Argentina, had said to him that he would make a "good agent". He asserted that he had not understood what Martens had meant at first, but that he had gone to the German Embassy the afternoon of the same day and placed his services at its disposal.

Dr. Erben left for Chile on December 24, but before departing gave me two addresses at which he might be reached in the United States. He said also that he was a good friend of Errol Flynn, the motion picture actor, and that he might be found through him. The addresses he gave me are as follow:

c/o Rudolph Scharf,  
850 Park Avenue,  
New York, New York.

c/o Chauncey Tramutolo,  
Alexander Building,  
Montgomery Street,  
San Francisco, California.

C.P.E.  
C.P.E.

File no. 885.91

CPE:rm

03 JAN 1950

In reply refer to  
A-M 862.8591/736

January 26, 1940

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

My dear Mr. Hoover:

Referring to a telephonic request from your Bureau made some weeks ago in a conversation which Mr. Warren of my office had with a member of your staff, I am pleased to enclose a copy of strictly confidential despatch no. 754 of January 11, 1940 from the American Consul General at Buenos Aires, Argentina, in regard to the steamship Ussukuma and one Dr. Hermann F. Erben who already has a record in your Bureau. Should additional information of value regarding Dr. Erben be received I shall be pleased to send a copy thereof to you.

Sincerely yours,

George S. Messersmith  
Assistant Secretary

Enclosure:

From Consulate General, Buenos Aires,  
no. 754, January 11, 1940, with  
enclosure.

J. Edgar Hoover, Esquire,  
Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation,  
Department of Justice.  
A-M:FW:MLM:SS



150-ERBEN HERMANN FREDERICK  
862.8591/736

GRR

7  
F820 004-1761

See 862.859/463

**TELEGRAM RECEIVED**

JR

GRAY

Valparaiso

FROM

Dated January 4, 1940

Rec'd 7:33 p.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

January 4, 6 p.m.

PD 12-12-39. For. aff. m.

Doctor Hermann Erben, subject of the Department's confidential circular passport instruction of September 2, 1938 and bearer of limited service passport issued Buenos Aires, December 1, 1939-38 is seeking repatriation as American seaman. Has served as ship's doctor on various American and foreign vessels. Last service on American ship in 1937. Arrived in Valparaiso from Buenos Aires after leaving service on advice of Consulate General as ships doctor on German vessel USSUKUMA. May be considered by habit and intent member of American Merchant Marine for the purpose of relief and transportation.

Please answer by telegraph.

MCNIECE

HPD

130-Erben, Hermann Frederick

03 JAN 5 1940

1940 JAN 5 -AM 10 59

RECEIVED  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

130-ERBEN, HERMANN FREDERICK

File

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
PASSPORT DIVISION

Rec'd 34

12/20

Mr. Scaulen -  
You have  
seen the previous  
on the U.S. Bureau &  
probably the attached  
letter regarding  
Dr. Erben's passport case.  
Do you think the  
Consul at Santiago  
should be tipped off  
about Erben's

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
PASSPORT DIVISION

- 2 -

Service on Nazi  
ships or do you  
believe he probably  
has been advised  
by Buenos Aires?

*[Signature]*

0015087000

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
PASSPORT DIVISION

December 21, 1939

Dear Mr. Elliott:

I do not know what could be accomplished by advising the Consul at Santiago regarding Dr. Erben. I assume that Santiago already has a copy of the Department's circular concerning Dr. Erben. There is, I believe, a later despatch from the Consul General at Buenos Aires concerning Dr. Erben.

130- Erben, Hermann Frederick  
PD:JJS:ES

0315087030

F820 004-1764  
CROSS-REFERENCE FILE

NOTE

SUBJECT Dr. Hermann F. Erben.  
Informs that name of - figures in the  
Consulate General's narcotics file list  
but according to Wilson he is now in  
possession of letter from the Assistant  
Chief of the Narcotics Division exonerat-  
ing him from complicity with the drug  
traffic. He has obtained release from the  
USSUKUMA and intends to leave soon.

rr

For the original paper from which reference is taken

See Tel. # 5 p.m.  
(Despatch, telegram, instruction, letter, etc.)

Dated Nov. 13, 1959 From Buenos Aires (Davis)  
To

File No. 862,8591/402

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 1-1540

031155870300

130 ERBEN, HERMANN FREDERICK



F820 004-1765

JI

GRAY

Buenos Aires

Dated November 13, 1939

Rec'd 5:17 p.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

November 13, 5 p.m.

Referring to my telegram of November 10, noon, Vice Consul Wilson reports from Bahia Blanca that the delay in the departure of the USSUKUMA has been due to the unwillingness of the crew to leave port.

Following the receipt of the Department's circular telegram of November 7, 11 a.m. the American citizens aboard were notified of its purport. The citizen mentioned in my telegram of November 4, noon has already obtained his release from the vessel and another citizen, the ship's surgeon Doctor Hermann F. Erben says he intends to leave it soon. His name figures in the Consulates General's narcotics file list No. 249 of July 1, 1933 but according to Wilson he is now in possession of a letter from the Assistant Chief of the Narcotic Division of the Treasury Department exonerating him from complicity with the drug traffic.

0315587300

DAVIS

EMB Transmitted to Navy and Coast Guard at 6:32 p.m.

F820004-1766

AIRMAIL

E7C

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 19, 1937.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Discharge at Rio de Janeiro of Herman F. Erben,  
doctor of S.S. WEST LAHMAN, and narcotic suspect.

I have the honor to refer to my strictly confidential  
despatch No. 263 of January 15, 1937, and previous des-  
patches on the above mentioned subject, and to enclose  
another memorandum prepared by Mr. Kazanjian on this  
case.

Respectfully yours,

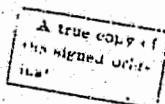
Emil Sauer,  
American Consul General.

Enclosure:  
Memorandum prepared by  
Vice Consul Kazanjian.

886.3/811.4/130

RSK/sb

(In quintuplicate to the Department of State)



03 JAN 20 1937

*Original filed 811.4/130 - Erben, Herman F.*

*for 130 Erben, Herman F. 17*

F820 004-1767

Enclosure to Despatch No. 270 of January 19,  
1937, of Emil Sauer, American Consul General, Rio.

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL,

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 19, 1937.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM:

Subject: Case of Dr. Herman F. Erben.

Dr. Erben sailed from Rio de Janeiro, as expected, on the S.S. DELNORTE on January 16th.

It may be stated that Dr. Erben, before his discharge and during the period he was awaiting sailing, was given every opportunity of refuting the charges made against him and was advised of his privilege of submitting any complaint he cared to make at the Consulate General. However, other than the general denial of the truth of the charges and his statements reported in our despatches, he preferred to reserve the defense of his case, even to the point of collecting his wages, until the time he returned to the United States.

As regards his American citizenship, he stated that when he returns this time to the United States he would be entitled to an unlimited passport as the five year period after his naturalization has been completed, and that he would then have a free hand to go anywhere and do as he pleased. (He mentioned as his next escapade a trip to Borneo with the American motion picture actor, Erroll Flynn.) He recited with much satisfaction the difficulties he had encountered in connection with his passport, boasting of the large file that Mrs. Shipley has on his case and of the manner in which he has evaded the restrictions, intended to be placed on his travel through passport limitations, by the use of his seaman's booklet and Seaman's Protective Certificate (No. 5290 issued on July 5, 1934 by the Collector of Customs, San Francisco) in lieu of a passport. He recalled how he was barred from returning to Austria and how, after he had obtained permission for a temporary return to Vienna, he was arrested and fined for introducing narcotics into the country without a special permit. He also prided himself in having been deported from India for advising a gathering of Indians to throw out the English and find a leader like Hitler. He was also proud of having recently received word that his two German sons have joined the Fascist forces in Spain.

As it would appear that Dr. Erben values his American citizenship only to the extent of the advantages he can derive from it in furtherance of his questionable pursuits, the information regarding Dr. Erben as contained in our despatches might be of interest to the Passport Division.

A true copy of  
the signed  
Jan 21/37

Reginald S. Kazanjian,  
American Vice Consul.

03:55:10:30

*File  
21-57*

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 15, 1937

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Discharge at Rio de Janeiro of Herman F. Erben,  
doctor of S.S. WEST MAHWAH, and Narcotic  
suspect.

*Original filed  
8/11, 2021/3 Erben, Herman F.*

*H.F. Erben, Herman F.*

I have the honor to refer to my strictly confidential despatch No. 258 of January 14, 1937, and to previous despatches on the subject above mentioned, and to enclose a further memorandum on the case prepared by Mr. Kazanjian under date of January 15th.

Very respectfully yours,

Emil Sauer,  
American Consul General.

Enclosure:  
Memorandum prepared by  
Mr. Kazanjian.

886.3

RSK/sb

(In quintuplicate to Department of State,  
copy to American Embassy, Rio de Janeiro)

A true copy of  
the signed original.  
104.

03 JAN 19 1937

F820004-1770

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL,  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 15, 1937.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM:

Subject: Dr. Erben's Case.

Dr. Erben called to-day in hopes of still avoiding sailing on the DELNORTE on the grounds that it was dangerous for him since the "scabs" on that ship know that he was on the WEST MAHWAH of ill repute, and of transferring to the O.S.K. ship. His complaint was merely brought to the attention of the Expresso Federal (local agents for the McCormick Line) who replied that their head office had refused the doctor's request and they were ordered to return him on the DELNORTE.

The fact that surgical instruments were reported as missing on the WEST MAHWAH was called to Dr. Erben's attention, to which he replied that in the hurry he may have packed them in the cases containing his personal effects which are in the customs. He emphasized, however, that he is well familiar with the Harrison Narcotic Act, that as he has a narcotic license he took over all narcotics from the captain on sailing from the United States for which he gave a receipt, and that on leaving at Rio de Janeiro he handed over all of the narcotics to Radio Operator Balcom who, he said, was Acting Purser, that the latter took them to the captain and returned to him with a receipt signed by the captain. He added that no narcotics had been used on the trip. He stated that he did not deal directly with the captain because the latter was not aboard at the time and that in any case such transactions were always done through the purser. (Expresso Federal advised me that the captain was aboard).

He also stated that he is going to prove to the McCormick Line when he returns how badly the ship was managed and who was to blame, with photographs which he had taken showing officers naked, in a drunken condition, in passengers' cabins, etc. (It would appear that of the thousands of photos that he has taken, many might be classed as obscene).

The Rio de Janeiro daily paper DIARIO DA NOITE of January 15th carried an article regarding Dr. Erben, containing certain of his past exploits (taken from old clippings he had already shown me) which article made mention of an incident of how he was imprisoned in Vienna for three months because he resembled Hitler.

03:15:07:00

Reginald S. Kazanjian,  
American Vice Consul.

RCK/sb

F820 004-1771

NO. 258

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 14, 1937.

SUBJECT: Discharge at Rio de Janeiro of Hermann F. Erben, doctor of S.S. WEST MAHWAH, and Narcotic Suspect.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,  
WASHINGTON.

SIR:

I have the honor to refer to my strictly confidential despatch of January 7, 1937, on the subject above mentioned, and more specifically to the second paragraph of Page 4 thereof in which it was stated that, in order not to delay further the sailing of the S.S. WEST MAHWAH from Rio de Janeiro, the captain promised to prepare affidavits detailing the complaints against the doctor and deliver them to the American Consul at Bahia.

There has now been received from the American Consul at Bahia a letter dated January 11, 1937, transmitting statements of the complaints signed by the master and all of his officers with the exception of First Assistant Engineer Charles A. Bowe. A copy of this letter, with stated enclosures, is transmitted herewith as enclosure No. 1. A copy of the inventory of medicines prepared by Chief Officer Scott and enclosed in the Consul's letter is not being transmitted as the only point of interest therein is the statement: "no surgical instruments of any description found".

A copy

03 JAN 1937

Original filed  
P/11, 20 210 - Erben, Herman F/4

J.W. 120-210 - Erben, Herman F

F020004-1768

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 811.20210 Erben, Herman F./7 FOR # 270

FROM Rio de Janeiro ( Sauer ) DATED Jan. 19, 1937  
TO NAME 1-1127

REGARDING: Herman F. Erben's American nationality;

Memorandum of conversation with Erben, suspected of espionage,  
in which he boasted of using his American citizenship to further  
his questionable activities.

jah

03120000

130-ERBEN, HERMAN F.

Confidential File

8820004-1772

-2-

A copy of another memorandum prepared by Mr.  
Kazanjian is attached herewith as enclosure No. 2.

Respectfully yours,

Emil Sauer,  
American Consul General.

List of enclosures:

- No. 1 - Copy of letter from the  
American Consul at Bahia;
- No. 2 - Copy of memorandum by Mr.  
Kazanjian.

886.3

RSK/jmr

(In quintuplicate to the Department of State.)

A true copy of  
the signed orig-  
inal *jm*

03:15:07:30



F820004-1773

Enclosure No. 1 to Despatch No. 258,  
dated January 1, 1937, from the  
Consulate General at Rio de Janeiro,  
Brazil, on the subject of "Discharge at  
Rio de Janeiro of Hermann F. Erben,  
doctor of S.S. WEST MAHWAH, and Narcotic  
Suspect".

C O P Y

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

In reply refer to  
File No. 886.3  
LW:GH

AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE

Bahia, Brazil, January 11, 1937.

Emil Sauer, Esquire,  
American Consul General,  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Sir:

I have received your letters of January 7, 1937  
and a copy of despatch No. 249, dated January 7, 1937,  
regarding the discharge of Hermann F. Erben, doctor on  
the s.s. "West Mahwah".

In accordance with your instructions I boarded the  
s.s. "West Mahwah" with the local officials as soon as  
the boat was in the harbor at Bahia and was immediately  
informed by the Captain and officer that they had  
experienced no more trouble since the Doctor was  
discharged in Rio de Janeiro. This was verified later  
by Mrs. Bolger, Mrs. McIntyre and the other passengers.  
In talking with the officers they had nothing to add  
to their signed statements, enclosed herewith, so I did  
not deem it necessary to take any further depositions.

In talking to the First Assistant Engineer Charles  
A. Bowe, who refused to sign the above mentioned  
certificate, he stated that he did not believe in signing  
such documents and that he would make a complete report  
when they arrived in San Francisco. Mr. Bowe did not  
make any definite statements either one way or another  
but he did say that the trouble began early on the voyage  
after they left the United States.

The radio operator Sydnor E. Balcom stated that he  
did not know very much about the doctor except that the  
Doctor and the Second Assistant Engineer Mr. Owens were  
having trouble and that he himself could not get along  
with the engineer, which naturally made Mr. Owens think  
he was a close friend of the doctor, when, as a matter of  
fact, he said, he did not have any contacts with the  
doctor, except as the radio operator on the ship. Mr.  
Balcom stated that both the Engineer and the Doctor were  
to blame for their trouble because the Doctor was  
interfering and saying things about the ship which he  
had no business to do or say. Further than this the  
radio operator stated the Doctor made no direct comments  
to him and he (radio operator) had nothing to add to the  
situation other than that found in his complaint given to  
the Consulate General while the ship was in Rio de Janeiro.

I spoke

I spoke to Lloyd Usinger (Union delegate) about the situation and he stated that he had had no direct dealings with the Doctor except one time when the Doctor came to the seaman's quarters and told him that the ship was out of prophylactics and that the Captain refused to purchase more and asked Mr. Usinger to speak to the Captain about it. Mr. Usinger continued by saying that he spoke to the Captain and that the Captain had said, "there must be some mistake because I am sure there was enough medical supplies for the entire voyage", and nothing more was said. Other than this seaman Usinger had nothing to add regarding the doctor's case.

I spoke to the other passengers but none of them could make any direct statements regarding the case and they could only report what they had heard and, since it is my opinion such statements are useless, I did not bother to take them down.

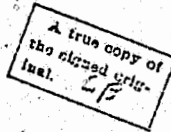
There is also enclosed a statement by Chief Officer A. Scott regarding a check taken of the medicine on board the ship after the Doctor left. Special reference is made to the statement on page three of the check regarding the fact that no surgical instruments were found on the ship and that Mr. Scott stated the ship carried a complete surgical outfit when she left San Francisco; the presumption being that the Doctor stole the instruments.

It is my personal opinion that the ship will continue its voyage without any further difficulties.

Respectfully yours,

(signed) Lee Worley,  
American Vice Consul.

Enclosure:  
As stated.



0315587030

F820 004-1778

Enclosure 2 to Despatch No. 258, dated January 14, 1937, from the Consulate General at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on the subject of "Discharge at Rio de Janeiro of Hermann F. Erben, doctor of S.S. WEST MAHWAH, and Narcotic Suspect".

(Copy)

Memorandum on Dr. Erben's case.

Dr. Erben called on January 9 and stated that he had eventually managed to get most of his personal effects out of the customs. He said that he did not dare to sail on the DELNORTE as the captain and crew of that vessel are aware of the DELVALLE incident in Buenos Aires. This incident he explained as follows: Four seamen of the DELVALLE were badly beaten and the crew of the WEST MAHWAH were blamed for the attack (Most likely another of the doctor's meddling influences). The local agent of the McCormick Line, however, has received instructions from head office in San Francisco to return him on the first Delta ship, and has refused to ship him on the PAN AMERICA as he had requested.

The Doctor said that he had advised Mr. Bolger (disembarked at Buenos Aires) to make an affidavit before the British Consul in San Juan, after the captain had threatened to have him deported from the United States as a communist (In this connection and as regards Radio Operator Baloom's complaint on behalf of Mrs. Bolger at this office, the captain stated that the doctor had been advising passengers to do so in order later to sue the company).

He was wearing a German Army belt when he called at the Consulate General, and seemed proud that he had fought in the German Army against the United States.

He presented a letter from the Dollar Line dated 1934, terminating his services without stating reasons. It was, however, far from complimentary to him.

He exhibited the following letters which he said he was going to use as evidence against the Captain's actions when he returns to the United States:

A note from Dr. Lacerda Guimarães, company's surgeon in Rio de Janeiro, reading: "About the seaman Robert Gilfillan suffering from gonorrhea and prostatitis - losing blood and fever must be removed to hospital. Rio de Janeiro. (signed) Dr. Lacerda Guimarães.". A footnote signed again by Dr. Lacerda Guimarães respelled "FEVER". Dr. Erben explained that the ship's company and the captain had read "fever" as "never", and that it was criminal that they would not take the advice of two doctors.

A letter dated Nov. 24 from the doctor to the captain complaining against the insulting language used by the latter to him at Santos.

photographic copy of a letter from the black gang delegate, Usinger, to the captain, complaining that the 2nd mate was soon sleeping while on watch and the 3rd asst. eng. seen drinking in a cabin when he should have been keeping his watch, which were witnessed by 1st asst. eng., Saccom, Mr. Bolger, Mr. Thompson, and the doctor.

A letter

A letter dated Jan. 4 at Rio de Janeiro (the ship was not in Rio on that date) from the doctor to the United States Inspection Service, regarding the 3rd asst. eng. not guarding his watch.

The doctor accused the captain of forging the bill of health to omit a call at Tacoma (Erben admitted that he (the doctor) certified the list as the ship's doctor), and said that the captain had told him that it did not have to be listed as no cargo was loaded there.

January 11, 1937. (signed) Reginald S. Kazaujian.

A true copy of  
the signed original.  
*me*

03 JAN 1937

149.

QUADRUPLICATE

File  
1-28-37

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 7, 1937.

CONFIDENTIALDischarge at Rio de Janeiro of Hermann F. Erben,  
doctor of S.S. WEST MAHARI, and Narcotic Suspect.*Original filed  
8/11/20210- Erben, Herman F/S**J. W. 1930 Erben, Hermann Frederick*

I have the honor to refer to my strictly confidential despatch of December 3, 1935, concerning the suspected espionage activities of Dr. Hermann Erben as reported by Captain E. L. Jansen of the S.S. WEST MAHARI of the McCormick Steamship Company. A sailing schedule of that ship, as included in the despatch, showed a return voyage to the United States via the west coast of South America. Reference is also made to Washington Confidential List, No. 249 dated July 1, 1933, Dr. Herman Frederick Erben (Von Erben), suspected of engaging in traffic in narcotics. The identity of the ship's doctor is established therefore without a doubt.

On January 6, 1937, 11 a.m., the S.S. WEST MAHARI arrived in Rio de Janeiro, having changed its scheduled course after reaching Buenos Aires. Ports visited after leaving Rio de Janeiro were Santos, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and, upon return, again Santos.

Shortly after the arrival of the ship, Sydney I. Falcon, radio operator, and Mrs. Ilse Dorothea Fabri Dol-

ordered Mrs. Marya Solovtze, passengers, called at the  
 [REDACTED] to present a complaint, a copy of

which

which is transmitted herewith as enclosure No. 1, written by Mr. Balcan against the conduct of the second assistant engineer, James V. Owens, towards Mrs. Bolger. Mrs. Bolger exhibited Departmental passport No. 344423 issued on September 16, 1936, in her maiden name of Islo Berothera Fabri, including her daughter Marion Illing Fabri Bolger. She stated that she married Mr. Bolger on October 13, 1936, at Panama. Mrs. McIntyre (Madame Lulgardo), Russian by birth, is holder of British passport No. A151639 issued by the Governor General of Australia on August 17, 1932.

A little later Captain Jansen, several of the ship's officers, and Dr. Erben called. The officers presented a letter dated January 6, a copy of which is transmitted herewith as enclosure No. 2, requesting the removal from the ship of Dr. Erben. Of the six officers signing the petition, only H.E. Scott, first officer, and J.V. Owens, second assistant engineer, were not present. The Consulate General obtained the presence of a director, Mr. Lund, of the local agency of the McCormick Steamship Company.

The charges against the doctor, made unanimously by the captain and his officers, were heard. They consisted in the main that by his continual meddling in practically all of the ship's affairs with a disposition to instigate quarrels, the doctor had become a disturbing menace to the discipline of the crew and a dangerous element to the passengers, to such an extent that the safety of the ship and the lives aboard were becoming jeopardized. Specific incidents mentioned were that he instigated the three days' strike of the ship's crew while in San Juan,

Porto

03 JAN 08 1937

- 3 -

Quarto Rico, and also the fight in Santos between the ship's crew and the crew of the S.S. PAN AMERICA; that he had continuously involved himself in the interests of the seamen against the captain and other officers of the ship; that he was seen wiping his hands on the American flag; that he is a Hitler fanatic, and gave the Hitler salute to a German freighter in Montevideo which was returned by a member of its crew; that he was with the seamen of the ship when they insulted the members of the American delegation to the Buenos Aires Peace Conference by yelling insulting language to them aboard the north-bound S.S. MOUNTAIN CROSS while in Santos; that he carries a revolver and brass knuckles with which he had often threatened people; and that he had taken some 4,000 photographs of every conceivable object usually while on duty.

In defending himself, Dr. Erben denied all of the charges. Although stating at the outset that he was taken by surprise by the request for his removal, he came well supplied with documents and photographic copies of letters with the intention of embarrassing the captain. He said that he had expressed willingness to the captain to be discharged at Buenos Aires, but now refused to consent to it.

In view of the present labor difficulties in the American merchant marine and Dr. Erben's alleged close intercourse with the crew which had already caused trouble in San Juan, it was suggested to the master that he might wish to withdraw his request for the doctor's discharge, complete the voyage, and report the matter to his company.

It was pointed out that a person of the doctor's character is a greater trouble than if he were discharged. After conferring with his subordi-

etc

etc officers, the captain stated that he feared further and more serious trouble if the doctor remained and that in the interest of the operation of the vessel and the lives of the persons on board he wished to press the charges. The captain promised to see that the second assistant engineer, Mr. Owens, was disciplined and that he behave in a respectful manner towards all passengers.

The consular officers handling the case considered that the accusations were well-founded and consented to his discharge. The captain had not logged individual complaints against the doctor but explained that the charge consisted of an accumulation of many disagreeable actions which had now become unbearable, and then recorded in the log a general charge that the doctor's continuous actions were jeopardizing the safety of the vessel. As the ship's sailing was already delayed (scheduled at 3 p.m.), the captain and his subordinate officers promised to make affidavits detailing the complaints and deliver them to the American Consul at Bahia. The doctor was told that the voluntary statements of any members of the crew or passengers could be taken by the American Consul at Bahia. The entry was read to Dr. Erben by Vice Consul Enzanjian and his reply, which was a general denial, was written in the log. After being discharged, Dr. Erben refused to sign for the wages due him, which remain in the custody of the Consulate General and will be handled in accordance with Section 224, Note 3, of the Consular Regulations. His personal effects were taken to the customs where they will be held until his departure.

The local agency of the McCormick Steamship Company has made itself responsible for the doctor and is returning him to the United States on the S.S. Delta of the Delta





F820004-1782

Enclosure 1 to Despatch No. 245,  
dated January 7, 1937, from the  
Consulate General at Rio de Janeiro,  
Brazil, on the subject of "Discharge  
at Rio de Janeiro of Hermann F.  
Urban, Doctor of U.S. NAVY AIR".

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

(Copy)

To: Consul, United States of America, Rio de Janeiro,  
Brazil.

From: Sydnor K. Bulcom, Radio Operator, Steamship West Mahwah.

Subject: Drunken and ungentlemanly manner and actions of James  
V. Owens, Second Assistant Engineer, Steamship West  
Mahwah, while at anchor in the Port of Angra dos Reis,  
Brazil, coupled with his desire to fight accompanied  
by threats to kill, etc.

Dear Sir:-

Approximately a few minutes before midnight of January  
4, 1937, James V. Owens, Second Assistant Engineer, of  
the Steamship West Mahwah then anchored in the harbor  
of Angra dos Reis, Brazil, returned from Angra dos  
Reis, in a drunken and disheveled condition, and  
immediately upon coming aboard came up the main deck,  
where I was sitting, talking to passengers Mrs. Ilse  
D. Fabri Bolger, Joseph Stockmeier, American Citizens,  
and the Ship's Surgeon, Dr. Hermann Urban.

He interrupted the conversation in a very rough and  
uncaring manner and began speaking to Mrs. Bolger in  
a very ungentlemanly and suggestive manner. He told  
her she should have been with him during the afternoon,  
(although it was quite windy and raining the greater  
part of the time, and she had her daughter of three  
years to take care of, feed and put to bed,) and  
stated that they had a large quantity of cognac and  
a fine dinner.

She replied: "You know I do not drink". That was all  
she replied to any of his insinuations and insults.  
He, the above mentioned man, remained absolutely  
silent, noting his intoxicated condition, and hoping  
that he would go to his room or elsewhere.

Finally, Mr. Stockmeier asked Mr. Owens why he did not  
remain there over night, and he replied, that there  
was only one woman in the crowd and no other James,  
that there was no use of his staying, but, if Mrs.  
Bolger had gone along, that would have been different.  
He annoyed her for about fifteen minutes, leaving and  
returning. He made many insinuating and insulting  
remarks to her, and remarks which would have been  
terrible even in bawdy house. Then, when Mrs. Bolger  
failed to answer him at all, he remarked: "are you  
waiting for your adviser to tell you what to say",  
and he looked directly at Dr. Urban, who remained  
absolutely silent, and soon thereafter, he noticed  
that I shifted my feet in front of the chair, as they  
were becoming cramped.

He then opened a profane, vile and vulgar tirade  
directed at me, and then remarked and pointed his  
finger, and sneered at Mrs. Bolger obviously infuriated  
by her silence against him. At her there trying to  
appeal directly to him. He repeated this three times.

He then

BEST COPY  
AVAILABLE

FRZD 004-1783

He then tried to apologize to Mrs. Bolger, and at the same time tried to tell her that he had said nothing vulgar, profane, etc. His apology however made it worse and insincere, drew no response from Mrs. Bolger. He again began his tirade on me, referring to me as a son of a bitch, "fink", "scab" and vulgar and vile epithets too numerous to mention. I then said to Mr. Owens: "You have said enough, you have insulted and annoyed the lady long enough". Then, Mr. Erben remarked to Mrs. Bolger: "Listen-The conversation is getting so that I am afraid we will have to be excused". Thereupon, Mr. Erben and Mr. Lockmeyer escorted Mrs. Bolger to her room in a terrified condition. And, Mr. Erben accompanied her even inside the passageway as Mr. Owens was yelling and shouting: "Now-I'm going to clean up on both of you, that is why I returned aboard". (This was overheard by First Assistant Engineer Charles J. Howe.) He returned to his room, and came outside again wearing a pair of canvas gauntleted gloves, and we noticed that the front parts of his fists were bulging, as though he had some article in it, possibly of metal, which he continually tried to conceal.

He continued his threats that he was out for blood, and a rapid fire line of abuse mingled with profanity and said: "There will be blood."

In the meantime I kept my distance from Mr. and Mr. Erben went to find the First Assistant Engineer, as he did not like the idea of being murdered or having a murder committed aboard the ship. By this time, I had reached the after deck with Mr. Owens in pursuit. I then painfully went down the ladder, as the broken blood vessels in my ankles were hurting me, and sought refuge in the sailors quarters, and two sailors came to the doorway, and as I approached the ladder leading up to the main deck, Mr. Owens was standing waiting for me, and before I got up the ladder he was shouting obscene, vile, vulgar and insulting epithets at me. However, I then noticed the First Mate, Mr. A. Scott and Mr. Erben standing on the opposite side of the deck. I approached them, pursued by Mr. Owens, and Mr. Scott then began asking why I had run to the sailors quarters, and accused me of carrying news from the Officers and Engineers back to the sailors, and remarked that he had known for sometime that there was a leak, and now, he knew who it was.

Although Owens was shouting and talking very loud, much to the annoyance of the passengers, he did not once ask him to be more quiet.

My story to Mr. Scott was interrupted almost continuously by the abuse of Mr. Owens, and, he refused to hear anything regarding the noise and disturbance, and told Mrs. Bolger through her port to go to sleep. Mr. Owens admitted to Mr. Scott that he had already apologized to Mrs. Bolger for what he had said, thereby admitting his guilt of harassment, etc., and, Mr. Scott was not interested, as a result.

Mr. Owens insisted that Mr. Erben and Mr. Scott should go to their rooms, and that he would stay in the deck.

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"stepped forward, and told Mrs. Folger whose frightened face appeared in the open port hole of her cabin: "Please Madam-Remain in your stateroom, and refuse these men permission to hold a trial on deck at that time". Mr. Scott agreed, and I went to my room, and retired for the night, and Dr. Urban and the others.

(Signed) H. K. Falcon

Subscribed and sworn to in my presence this day of January, 1937."

A true copy of  
the signed orig-  
inal.

03 JAN 27 1937

F820004-1785

Enclosure No. 2 to Despatch No. 249,  
dated January 7, 1937, from the  
Consulate General at Rio de Janeiro,  
Brazil, on the subject of "Discharge  
at Rio de Janeiro of Hermann E.  
Erben, Doctor of L.S. and T. M. M. M."

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

(Copy)

THE CORVICK STEAMSHIP COMPANY

Home Office

SAN FRANCISCO

S.S. West Mahwah  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.  
Jan. 6, 1937.

Consul General of  
The United States of America;  
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Dear Sir;

We the undersigned Officers of the steamer West  
Mahwah request that the ship's surgeon, Dr. H. Erben be  
removed from this vessel at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Due to his continual daily actions in practically  
all ship's affairs, we consider him a disturbing and dangerous  
element among personnell and passengers. We have been unable  
to maintain the peace of the ship on account of these actions.

Signed

M. H. Barber - 3rd Mate

H. Mc Dowell - Ch. Eng'r.

Alfred C. Aitken, Jr. - 2nd Officer. J. V. Owens, 2nd Asst Eng'r.

H. A. Scott - 1st Officer.

D. A. Stanton, 3rd Asst Eng'r.

A true copy of  
the signed orig-  
inal

03 JAN 10 1937

F820004-1786

Enclosure No. 3 to Document No. 349,  
of General Gernand Willauer, Rio de  
Janeiro, Brazil, dated January 7,  
1937, on the subject of "Discharge  
at Rio de Janeiro of Hermann T. Erben  
Doctor of M.D. in 1934".

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL,

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 7, 1937.

MEMORANDUM:

Subject: Discharge of Dr. Erben.

Just prior to the sailing of the S.S. WEST MARIAN at 8:45 p.m., January 6, 1937, Mrs. McIntyre, who embarked at Buenos Aires, threatened to leave the ship on the grounds that she was not well and did not care to travel without a doctor. Mr. Lund of the agency and the captain explained to her that a doctor was not required on the ship and that the passage contract did not provide for one. She finally decided to sail, but insisted that her cabin be changed, which was not done at the time as there was no other available. Dr. Erben stated to Mr. Kasonjian that he had persuaded Mrs. McIntyre to sail, and had also dissuaded the two delegates of the crew from leading a strike, which he said they had offered to do for him. The doctor wished to give publicity to the whole affair but was discouraged from doing so.

As regards the expressed suspicions of espionage activities of Dr. Erben, it would appear that his loyalty to the United States is questionable. His interest in political affairs is evidenced by his own statement, if to be credited, that he signed on the ship in order to go to the Buenos Aires Peace Conference, but his reported slander of the American delegation is most certainly not conducive to the belief that he respects American policies. Neither do his subversive influences on American seamen in any way reflect concern in the welfare of the United States. According to a confidential report of the ship's agent in Santos, the doctor caused the fight there between the crews of the S.S. WEST MARIAN and the S.S. VAN AMERICA. Furthermore, his friendship with Radio Operator Malone is noteworthy as the latter, according to Chief Engineer McDowell, was one of the leaders of the seamen's strike of 1934 on the Pacific coast.

As respects any suspicion of his being engaged in carrying narcotics, it may be said that his selection of the comparatively menial position of ship's doctor on a small cargo-passenger vessel (he has several newspaper clippings of his accomplishments and expeditions in the Far East), and his actions, would seem to strengthen such suspicion. His willingness to be signed off in Buenos Aires, but not in Rio de Janeiro might have been caused by the change in the ship's schedule at Buenos Aires which better suited his plans. Or his objection to being discharged as a doctor may be due to a wish to fit some more

FEZ0004-1787

more subtle scheme. Furthermore, his close association with certain members of the crew and passengers, especially with passengers McIntyre and Belger, Radio Operator Malcom, and seaman Essinger (a union delegate) and Dunc (placed in hospital at Pernambuco and signed on in Rio de Janeiro), may have been cultivated for assisting his smuggling interests.

Reginald S. Kaganjian,  
American Vice Consul.

RDE/sb

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NO. 273

TO INFORMATION COPY  
TO AIRMAIL AND 1 COPIES  
SENT BY AIRMAIL

~~AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL~~

Dec. 27/35

Buenos Aires, Argentina, December 22, 1956.

**SUBJECT:**

AMERICAN PASSPORT OF DR. HERMANN FREDERICK ERBEN,  
NATURALIZED AMERICAN CITIZEN.

RECEIVED  
DEPT. OF STATE  
AIR MAIL  
JAN 15 1938  
HONORABLE  
MEMBER OF THE  
COMMISSIONERS  
AND RECORDS  
CLERK OF THE  
WASHINGTON.

I have the honor to refer to the Department's instruction of November 13, 1936, (File No. 130-Erben, Hermann Frederick) with which was enclosed a seaman's certificate to be delivered to Dr. Hermann Frederick Erben of the S.S. "WEST HAINAH" upon surrender of his passport.

In accordance with the Department's instruction, the seaman's certificate has been delivered to Dr. Erben and his passport No. 248,504, issued by the Department of State on December 7, 1935, is forwarded with this despatch.

Dr. Erben states that he is relinquishing his employment on the S.S. "WEST MAHEWAN" when that vessel reaches San Francisco about the end of January 1937, and he requests that, if possible, his passport be forwarded to the Passport Agency at San Francisco for delivery to him at that time upon surrender of his seaman's certificate.

Respectfully yours,

• William C. Burdett,  
American Consul General.

enclosure: Passport no. 243,101.



F820004-1789

No. 77



AMERICAN CONSULATE

Montevideo, Uruguay, March 25, 1931

U.S. COM. &amp; RES.

SUBJECT: ~~APR 16 31~~ PASSPORT TO HERMAN F. ERBEN 1631

1-1046 070

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

WASHINGTON.

SIR:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the Department's instruction of February 23, 1931, File No. 160- Erben, Herman F., in which it directs a report as to the basis for the issue by this office of an unlimited passport without reference of the case to the Department.

In reply, the Department is respectfully informed that the above mentioned person came to Montevideo as physician aboard the American Steamship "West Lotus", bearing a Seamen's Protection Certificate, No. 1605 issued November 15, 1930, by the Collector of Customs at San Francisco, California. He also bore a letter from the School of Medicine, University of California, San Francisco, stating that Dr. Herman F. Erben is connected with the above institution in the capacity of tropical disease specialist, and was proceeding to South America to gather whatever information he could regarding tropical diseases.

When

03 APR 27 1931

-130-ERBEN, HERMAN F.

APR 27 1931

When Dr. Erben applied here for a service passport he was carefully examined and emphatically asked why he did not procure an American passport before leaving the United States. His response was that he did not apply for a passport in the United States because a Seaman's Protection Certificate was sufficient identification for accompanying the American vessel as physician. He gave no indication that he had possessed a passport.

After arrival here, he decided to visit Paraguay and Chile while the ship to which he was attached remained in Buenos Aires. Since he needed a passport for such travel, this Consulate General issued him one upon the basis of his Seaman's Protection Certificate, supported by his naturalization certificate.

In view of the fact that Dr. Erben returned to the United States aboard the "West Lotus" and is now connected with the University of California, School of Medicine, Parnassus Avenue, San Francisco, this office is unable to cancel the seaman's certificate mentioned above as directed by the Department.

It is much regretted that, through an oversight, this certificate was not taken up when the passport was issued. It is believed, however, that it can be obtained from Dr. Erben at the address given. The regulation regarding reference to the Department will be followed strictly in future. It was considered that the certificate in question

was

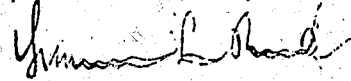
03 JUN 1938

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-3-

was the equivalent of a passport in so far as concerns  
the evidence necessary to obtain it.

Respectfully yours,



Leslie E. Reed,  
American Consul General.

File 130.8  
WEB:DRH.

03 05 58 10 30

F820004-1792

Berlin, February 13, 1948

SECRET

ATTENTION FC

NO. 210

Rec'd  
Feb. 26

SUBJECT: INTERROGATION OF HERMANN FRIEDRICH ERBEN.

ACTION  
FC

INFO  
OGD  
FC  
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The Political Adviser for German Affairs has the honor to enclose herewith copies of a report on the interrogation of Herman Friedrich (or Herman Frederick) ERBEN, who was repatriated from China in the recent shipment and arrived at internment on October 4, 1947. The interrogation was carried out by intelligence officers at Camp 74, Ludwigsburg.

The Erben interrogation may be of interest to the Department of Justice, notably in respect to the narcotics aspect of Erben's past, and the Mission indicated that while it had no further interest in him his case should be brought to the attention of the OMVGUS narcotic bureau before he was released.

A copy of this despatch is also being sent to the U.S. Consular Branch at Berlin, since the matter of Erben's citizenship may again arise in the near future.

Enclosure: Copy of report of Erben's interrogation.

In original and ozalid to the Department  
Copy to CE - Mr. Bean  
Copy to American Consulate General, Shanghai  
Copy to Consular Branch, Berlin

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130-ERBEN, HERMANN FREDERICK THEODORE

SECRET

F820004-1793

Enclosure to aesp. no.  
210 dated February 13,  
1947 from Berlin.

SECRET

INTELLIGENCE DETACHMENT  
SCREENING CENTER

Ludwigsburg, Germany  
APO 154, US Army  
12 December 1947

SPECIAL INTERROGATION REPORT

DETAINEE: ERBEN, Herman Frederick

1. ADMINISTRATIVE DATA:

Subject was deported from China and arrived at this Center 4 Oct 1947.

2. PERSONAL DATA AND ACTIVITIES:

15 November 1897: Born in Vienna, Austria.

1903 - 1907: Attended and graduated from Public School, Vienna.

1907 - 1915: Attended State High School Vienna, graduated with matura.

1915 - 1918: Served with the Austrian Army and was honorably discharged with the rank of First Lieutenant.

1918 - 1921: Attended University Vienna, Medical School.

1923: Received fellowship to study in the United States. While there, he received an Immigration visa.

24 March 1924: Subject filed a Declaration of Intention in the court of Morristown, N.J., to become an American citizen, and received his first papers.

1926: Subject went back to Austria and graduated with a degree as Medical Doctor. One month later, (August 1926), he returned to the United States, passed the New York Civil Service Examination, and was assigned as a medical doctor to Wards Island State Hospital.

1927: Subject was licensed to practice medicine and surgery in Louisiana.

1928: After having passed the examination for the state of Washington, subject was also licensed there.

1929: Subject was commissioned by the Australian Government, Department of Aborigines, to lead a scientific expedition into the Peninsula of York, Northern Queensland, Australia.

1930: Upon his return from Australia, subject took his third State Board Examination in Sacramento, California, and received his third license from the State of California.

Subject took the Oath of Allegiance in the U.S. District Court of San Francisco and became a naturalized American citizen. In the same year, he was assigned by Dr. A. C. Reed to South America, representing the Pacific Institute of Tropical Medicine of the University of California in Berkeley.

1931:

SECRET

(Enclosure to desp. no.  
110 dated February 13,  
1948 from Berlin.

SECRET

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1931: After he returned from South America, subject entered the service of the "Dollar Line" as ship's doctor. He served under Captain Gregory CULLEN, Lt. Comm., U.S.N.R., on the SS President Garfield on "Round the World" service.

1932: Subject left the "Dollar Line" and went via the Far East to New Guinea on another scientific expedition, which was financed by himself. On this trip he met the film star Errol FLYNN and became a very close friend of same.

1933: Subject returned from New Guinea to Europe and took up post-graduate work at his old school in Vienna.

1934: Subject accompanied as medical officer the Austro-American Transasiatic expedition. In this capacity he went by automobile from Palestine, Transjordan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, India and finally via Burma and Indo-China to Peking.

1935: Subject returned from Calcutta, India to New York.

1936: ERREN practiced medicine in Danville, N.J., and received his fourth medical license, this time from the state of New York. Towards the end of the year he took another trip to South America as ship's surgeon.

1937: He returned from South America and in the same year he and his friend Errol FLYNN embarked in New York for London and went via Paris to Spain. Being in London subject volunteered with a British ambulance unit, which was committed for the loyalists in Spain. Errol FLYNN also went as journalist and unofficial observer to Spain. After 20 days in Spain, subject went to Vienna and from there to Canton, China.

1937: In Vienna, subject received a Red Cross appointment, this time from the Chinese Red Cross. As leader of a group of ten medical doctors, subject embarked in Trieste for Shanghai. This group supposedly had to take over the British Military Hospital in Nanking. Since Nanking had fallen before subject arrived, he was forced to find his way back to the United States. Chiang-Kai-shek's government disregarding the contracts, and he returned to America as ship's surgeon on the liner "Triton", arriving via Japan and Panama in New York in spring 1938.

1938: During his stay in San Pedro, U.S. immigration authorities, (Inspector DAVIS) ordered ERREN to surrender his naturalization certificate, because the government "wanted to check up something". Subject claims that he surrendered his certificate and did not know the reason and his constitutional rights.

It is assumed by the undersigned that the order to surrender his naturalization papers was for the following:

This office received a letter from Mr. Robert L. PERRY (Chief Public Safety Branch) in which subject is charged with activities in narcotic traffic. The same letter mentions that a Dr. ERREN is an internationally wanted person. A copy of the letter will be attached to this report.

1938: Since his naturalization papers were taken away from him, subject returned on the "Margaret Johnson" once more to Europe.

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1939:

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1939: EREBEN made a trip as surgeon on board the German ship SS "Ussukuma" around Africa, and also served as ship's surgeon on the SS "Westerland" on the Antwerp-New York run.

Subject claims that he realized that war was more than likely and attempted to smuggle his two boys who were of military age out of Germany. He states that he would have been able to accomplish the task since he had an assignment on the German ship SS "Ussukuma" on the "Around Africa" run. His two sons remained in Germany. The outbreak of the war in September 1939 found EREBEN in south African waters. The boat to which he was assigned to as ship's surgeon had left Lourenco Marques in Portuguese East Africa and ran the blockade under orders by the German admiralty to act as a supply ship for the famous German ship "Graf Spee" to Argentina. Off the coast of Bahia Blanca (Coast of Argentina) the "Ussukuma" was sunk by the British cruiser "Exeter". Two crew members, so EREBEN claims, were American citizens, Helmut SCHUETZE from Hamburg and himself. (EREBEN still did not know whether he actually lost his citizenship). Both of them contacted U.S. authorities in Buenos Aires. Thus an American citizen, EREBEN was not interned as a sailor by the Argentine Government, and was immediately released. He received from the U.S. Consulate in Buenos Aires an American passport (no. 272) and returned to America. EREBEN claims and states that he wanted to show his loyalty as an American citizen and by the first chance he received, he took 100 photographs of the hits which the "Graf Spee" had received and suffered during the battle of Montevideo. He states that he gave the films to Consul Mr. ENGLISH who forwarded the films to the U.S. Naval Intelligence. EREBEN also surrendered to Mr. ENGLISH and Consul Mr. WILSON a detailed log of the blockade running, the type of camouflage used by the SS "Ussukuma" which he handed over to U.S. naval authorities.

After he had given all available naval intelligence about German shipping in the La Plata to U.S. naval authorities, EREBEN crossed via the Andes into Chile to investigate German shipping which had taken refuge in great numbers in Chilean ports. EREBEN further claims that he investigated the German training ship for cadets, "Prival", which was anchored in Valparaiso, and reported results to the local U.S. consulate.

1940: Subject sailed as a crew member of the SS "Nightingale" via west coast ports and Panama for New York, where he arrived at the end of February 1940. In New York he got in touch with U.S. naval authorities and handed to Commander Downer, Third U.S. Naval District, films of interned German ships he had taken. He also surrendered the pictures of the "Graf Spee", and made a detailed report about the naval intelligence he had been able to collect by personal contacts with the crews of interned German ships in west coast ports of South American on his way from Valparaiso to New York. He also contacted FBI authorities and during his entire stay in New York, from February 1940 on, until he left for the west coast in August 1940, he remained in close contact with the FBI. The person who received intelligence reports about "Band" and "German Information Bureau" activities was a Mr. LANGILL from the FBI. He claims that he furnished American authorities photographs of meetings of the "Band", the celebration of the visit of the Duke of Saxony at 80th Street, and original Nazi documents.

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During



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-4-

During March and April, subject served as ship's surgeon on the American ship "Panama" making one trip through the Canal Zone. Upon his return, subject's appointment as full time contract surgeon for C.C.C. camp duty in the IV Corps area had come through. Subject left the Panama line and went under orders to Ft. Moultrie, S.C., for training. After completion he was assigned to Selring, Fla., for active duty.

Subject states that his pending citizenship trial made his remaining as surgeon for the U.S. Government impossible. His contract with the C.C.C. was discontinued by Washington.

Subject went on trial before Judge WELSH in the U.S. District Court in San Francisco. Mr. Louis MERCADO acted as District Attorney and Mr. RAMUTOLO acted as subject's defense counsel. The charge, so subject claims, was that his naturalization should be set aside as illegal, inasmuch as he had not met the requirements for naturalization.

1. Subject had not resided actually continuously for five years prior to naturalization in the U.S., but had interrupted his residence for more than 6 months at a time.
2. Subject had not resided for 6 months in the county from where he had file his Application for Naturalization, namely, San Francisco County.

Subject states that he waited for 2 1/2 months for the decision of the Court. Since there was the danger, at least theoretically, that the U.S. might enter the war, in the case of losing his citizenship, subject might face arrest as an enemy alien. To escape the consequences and to avoid possible deportation or internment, subject crossed into Mexico. Subject further claims that his public trial in San Francisco, his stories about "Graf Spee", put the German intelligence on his trail in Mexico City. He was called to a meeting with German Consul General HIRON WALLERBERG. After various talks referring to his unjust trial in San Francisco and Hitler's theory that "after all blood was thicker than ink", subject was offered a job as German intelligence agent.

SUBJECT ACCEPTED THE JOB AS GERMAN INTELLIGENCE AGENT

1. Subject claims that he accepted the proposition to become a German intelligence agent, fully conscious of the fact that at the present, he was still an American citizen, and thus subject to the penalty of high treason.
2. ERBEN admits that he was not forced or coerced to accept the job.
3. Subject states that he accepted the job on his own free will, and did not intend to construct or claim any authorization from any of the U.S. government agencies with whom he had previous contact.
4. The reason why subject accepted to become a German intelligence agent, so he claims,



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was because it gave him a unique chance to do some intelligence work for the United States. What he had done so far was only what he observed from the outside; now he had a chance to work from the inside. He also states that he wanted to show his loyalty to American, and retain or regain his U.S. citizenship, which as far as at that time, January 1941, was still undecided. Subject stated to the interrogator that he was aware of the danger to become a self-styled, free-lance American agent by posing as a German agent.

Having agreed to become a German agent, subject was given a false German passport under the name of Alois ECKERT, musician, and so was in possession of two passports, the old American seaman's identification certificate and the above mentioned false German passport.

February 1941: Subject was directed by order of Baron WALLEMBERG, German Consul General in Mexico, to proceed to Japan because of his previous experience and knowledge in the Far East. In Tokyo, subject was received by the German Naval Attache Admiral WIENREKER and Lt. Cmdr. HELLSTEDT. From Tokyo, subject proceeded for active duty as a German intelligence agent to Shanghai, and was finally attached to the staff of Lt. Cmdr. Louis Theodor SIEFEN, head of the Abwehr in China.

SUBJECT STARTED WORKING AS A GERMAN INTELLIGENCE AGENT FOR THE ABWEHR IN CHINA

It should be noted that at the time subject was working for the German Intelligence Service, he was still in possession of an American passport and his citizenship was still pending in the States. Subject also had a German passport, and so was protected in two ways.

His job was to collect information about Allied shipping, cargo, route of ships, personnel, etc.

Subject was ordered by the German intelligence to pose only as an American citizen, and as a communist. The reason why he had to pose as an American communist could not be obtained from subject. As one reason he states that, as a communist, the American crews would not assume that he was working for the German intelligence. As above mentioned subject went on each boat which arrived in Shanghai, invited the crews to go with him to dances and have a good time. On such occasions he tried to employ crew members for the German intelligence. He states that he was ordered to confuse and make propaganda against the United States which was likely to enter the war. Further he claims, that, to the best of his knowledge, no American crew members were ever in the pay of the German Intelligence Service.

June 1942: Subject's next assignment came in June 1942 when Mr. SIEFEN (head of the Abwehr), intending to smuggle BRENN as an American representative on the SS "Conte Verde" to open a listening post for the Navy in Portuguese East Africa. He was trained in code work and the use of secret ink and given cover addresses in Lisboa, where he was supposed to send his reports. Subject states that

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SIEFKEN's plan did not succeed because subject did not dare to approach American consular authorities in Shanghai to engineer his repatriation.

1943: Since all plans failed, it is assumed by the interrogator that SIEFKEN did not want anything to do with ERBEN, and so ERBEN was interned by the Japanese. First he was sent to Long-yha and after a short stretch in the notorious Bridge House of the Japanese Kampetai, he was transferred to Pootung camp, where he remained until his liberation by American troops.

1945: In 1945 subject was employed as a civilian employee of the U.S. Army, 12th Malaria Control Detachment in Kiangwan Airport. At this time he was arrested by the Provost Marshal and lodged in the American section of Ward R.V. Jail in Shanghai.

Subject states that no charges were read to him, but the official release in the local papers stated that he had been arrested under the suspicion of high treason and war crimes committed by ERBEN. Subject made the following statement to the investigating officers and repeated the same statement to this interrogator:

"I want to be tried as an American citizen for whatever acts I have committed. Even if the technicality of the cancellation of my American citizenship in spring 1941 should have made me from this very moment on stateless and thus a charge of high treason impossible, I want to be tried as an American citizen.

"I accepted the offer to do German intelligence work actually in January 1941 in Mexico City, at a time when I still enjoyed American citizenship. But since I was not notified of the cancellation of my citizenship until 25 January 1943, although I had registered my arrival in Shanghai at the American Consulate in March 1941, and later on registered with the Swiss Consulate for repatriation, I was fully entitled to consider myself an American citizen until January 1943. I can prove this fact by the papers issued to me for repatriation by the Swiss Consulate, stating that I was an American citizen, given to me on 8 December 1942. I have, therefore, on my own responsibility and considering myself an American citizen, served before and after 8 December 1941 (that means in times of war between America and Germany) as a German intelligence agent. I do not intend to claim or construct any authorization for such work from any of the U.S. government agencies I had previous dealings with. I also was in no way forced by German authorities to work for them. What I did I considered a unique chance to prove my loyalty to the American flag, whereby I hoped to retain or, if need be, regain my U.S. citizenship. For my acts I alone am responsible and I intend to take full responsibility without reservation."

January 1946: Subject states that he was unconditionally released by the U.S. Army. After his release he was notified by Colonel O'CONNOR that Captain Frank T. FARRELL wanted to see subject at his office, 208 RTE. Ferguson, House 8. Captain FARRELL, who was at that time leading the American Investigation Team with headquarters in Shanghai, Judge Advocate General's Office, and was also considered to be a member of U.S.S., asked ERBEN, if he still felt

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loyal to America, and if he would care to assist his mission. ERBEN agreed and was assigned to duty in January 1946. His rank on the payroll was: Civilian Employee United States Army, and his monthly salary started with \$90.00. Subject states that his work with Captain FARRELL is recorded in the government files of the Judge Advocate in Shanghai, and consisted mainly in collecting and interpreting evidence for the War Crimes Trial of the 28 defendants, known as the EHRHARDT espionage ring. During the trial he was the main prosecution witness. After the EHRHARDT trial, in February 1947, subject continued to work for Captain FARRELL until his return to America.

Prior to Captain FARRELL's departure, he handed subject over to Colonel Amos D. MOSCRIP JR. who was continuing FARRELL's work in Shanghai.

Subject worked continuously as an American agent for Colonel MOSCRIP in the same capacity as he had worked for Captain FARRELL. ERBEN started under Colonel MOSCRIP at \$160.00 per month and was raised after 2 months, in May 1947, to \$200.00 per month. Subject further states that he was on active duty under Colonel MOSCRIP's command until 1 September 1947, the day of his arrest by Chinese authorities, and he has not been notified by his Officer-in-Charge to the contrary. His last order, dated 4 September 1947, and sent by cable to subject when he was on board the U.S.A.T. "General Black", read as follows:

"SIGNAL CORPS UNITED STATES ARMY

Received at 2100 z 04 September. Zm Shanghai, China RC>NNL Shanghai,>NNJ CK 30 September 3, 1420.

Colonel Plumpkin for Hermann Erben, General Black, XSG.

Request you send me your address in Germany immediately upon arrival so that I can make suitable arrangements for you stop regret unable to see you just before sailing.

Colonel Moscrip."

3. COMMENTS:

1. It would appear that ERBEN's employment by US forces in China was terminated by his repatriation to Germany, since this office has received no advice concerning his handling or disposition.

2. ERBEN is being held until clearance for his release is received from higher headquarters.

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*None status*

*80*

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

DWR

PLAIN

Bern

FROM Dated January 12, 1943

Rec'd 11:12 p.m.

Secretary of State,  
Washington.

256, Twelfth.

AMERICAN INTERESTS SHANGHAI

Foreign Office note January 11 transmits follow-  
ing from Swiss Consul General Shanghai.

"Please telegraph status citizenship relief  
evacuation of Herman Frederick Erben reference  
Department instructions dated September 2, 1938 file  
Erben." 590

*File  
Tel Bern  
1/14 ant*

HARRISON

HRL

130-ERBEN, HERMANN FREDERICK

*130 - Erben, Hermann Frederick*

Record .....to.....inclusive.  
No other record .....to.....inclusive.  
Domestic APPLICATION CLEARED Foreign  
" Ren. 3/19/27 " Ren.  
" Val. " Col.  
" Repl. " Col.  
" Amend.  
" Int.

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EMC



THE FOREIGN SERVICE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*File*

*95% London*

AMERICAN EMBASSY

No. 215  
Confidential

February 5, 1940

Memorandum

Information has been received that Herman Frederick ERBEN left Buenos Aires on December 23 for the United States of America via Chile, and that he may work as a German agent while there. The two addresses that he has given for communication are as follows:-

C/o. Rudolf SCHARFF, 850 Park Avenue,  
New York, and

C/o. Chauncey TRAMUTOLO, Alexander Building, (?)  
Montgomery Street, San Francisco.

He obtained a new U.S. passport No. 272, serial No. E.242708, issued by the U.S. Consulate in Buenos Aires on December 1, 1939. At the moment however he is believed to be still in Antofagasta, Chile.

The information the authorities here have about this individual is as follows:-

Age about 43; Austrian subject by birth, but became a naturalized American subject on November 10, 1930. While in the United States he was suspected of being connected with the narcotics and arms traffic, but was however acquitted on this charge. He has travelled extensively, often as ship's doctor. In July 1935 he entered India via Iraq and Afghanistan with an expedition known as the Austro-American Trans-Asiatic Expedition, which had the support of the STEYR Motor Works. On October 10 of the same year he was deported from India following prosecution under the Indian Arms Act. In 1936, however, he succeeded in entering the United Kingdom where he showed himself

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to

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to be particularly anti-British in his sympathies. Early in 1937 he is supposed to have accompanied Errol Flynn to Spain. In 1938 he was travelling on passport No. 248564, issued in Washington December 7, 1935, and renewed December 7, 1937, valid until December 7, 1939. This passport was endorsed by the American authorities in Vienna "Not valid for travel in China." He succeeded in getting to China however, and on January 12, 1938 appears to have left Hong Kong for Los Angeles.

This information is passed on in case it is thought worth while to keep a watch on his activities while in American territory.

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